

SPIDER-MAN COMES ALIVE!



Who can crawl up and down walls, leap over rooftop canyons, come crashing through upper story windows to save ladies in distress, etc. etc. just like Spider-Man? Fred Waugh, TV stuntman, that's who.

by David Sutton



Fred Waugh, unmasked, with old pal, John Wayne, a former stuntman himself.



Nick Hammond, the actor who plays Spider-Man.



SPIDEY finally has a TV series of his own (Wednesdays at 8 PM CBS), which for any kid old enough to not believe in Santa Claus obviously raises a question—who'd they get to do all the climbing up and down walls? Sure, if a guy in a comic strip is going to act like a spider, that's easy or even if it's a cartoon, it would still be easy—but what about on TV, with real live buildings and real live actors, and real live possibilities of going SPLAT!!! down on the sidewalk? And if your answer to this vital question is that they did it all with trick camera shots and *nobody* was climbing up and down buildings, ... well, you'd be 1000% wrong! There actually is a guy, his name is Fred Waugh, he's 45, he's been a TV and movie stuntman 21 years, and the truth of the matter is that he considered "Spider-Man" a fantastic opportunity for him.

You see, most of what stuntmen do is crack up cars in chase scenes and fall off horses. They get shot a lot and chairs get smashed over their heads in a lot of fights. So for a stuntman, when the chance comes along to play a modest, unassuming physics graduate student who can do anything that a spider can do, who gets to flirt with death, tightrope 10 stories above the street, and who can save himself by shooting a web out over thin air, he jumps with joy.

Or at least that's what Fred Waugh says he did. Fred's done stunts for "The Man from U.N.C.L.E.," "S.W.A.T." and lots of other TV shows and movies. "But Spider-Man? Now there was really a challenge. I mean, if I really was a spider," Fred says, "then it would be no sweat. But to go out on a building with a little piano wire strapped around my waist and actually *act* like a spider? Ho-ho. A stuntman lives a lifetime for a chance like that."

In all the pictures you see where Spidey (i.e. Fred) is outside, the piano wire is either attached to his waist or to a ring that he holds in his hand. At the



other end of the wire there's a pulley and maybe a half-dozen guys who are in walkie-talkie communication with Fred and who hoist him up and down as the scene requires. But if you think for a second that being lowered up and down a building face by a tiny strand of piano wire is easy, you should probably be packing your bags for Hollywood.

The fact is that the biggest dangers lie in little things that non-stuntmen would probably never think of. For instance, the buildings you see Spidey climbing are mostly old ones. Fred Waugh checks them out carefully before working, but what if the wire or his climbing up and down loosens a slab of plaster or an old piece of rusty screen that could either hit him or snap the wire? The wire is gauged to hold 285 pounds, but what if something caused a sudden kink in it? Like many famous circus performers, Fred doesn't work with a net and because he wears Spidey's costume, he can't possibly use a helmet or the padding he'd wear doing stunts in lots of other shows.

Take a look at that dark series of three shots that show Spider-Man crashing through a window to rescue a girl from the clutches of the nefarious Dr. Moon. The reason the shots are so dark is that it was raining cats-and-dogs out the night they were shooting the scene—in fact, Los Angeles was in the middle of one of its worst rainstorms in 10 years, they got 3

inches of rain that night. But of course the shooting had to go on. So there was Fred Waugh, standing out in the rain on a platform three stories off the ground with his wires, the platform, and everything else getting slippery and incredibly dangerous, and still he had to swing himself back like a trapeze artist on his wire and come crashing through the window. On TV, it will all look easy.

Spider-Man will shoot a



"I'm Used to the Danger."

strand of web out of his hand and the web (which is actually made out of nylon and which on many shots is intertwined with the piano wire) will attach itself to an upper story window ledge, and Spidey will come flying in on the strength of his web. But for Fred Waugh, who can't really make webs, and who is the kind of purist who likes to point out that on the old "Superman" TV series they used trick photography but that on "Spider-Man" they haven't used it at all, it's a job that takes daring, precision, and intelligence.

Fred Waugh, as we said, is 45. The actor who plays Spider-Man when Spidey's not doing stunts, Nick Hammond, is 28. Nick Hammond's face is bound to become well-known to millions of viewers, who will see it when he plays Peter Parker. Viewers will never see Fred Waugh's face. So Fred's the veteran behind the scenes, doing the hardest bits of all. It doesn't bother him, though. "I'm used to all of that, just like I'm used to the danger. You know I got my back broken and 500 stitches when a boat ran over me in 'The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.' Just about every part of my body's been broken at one time or another—I'm almost as in bad shape as Evel Knievel. But what can you do? The danger and the fear are what it's all about. I love doing Spider-Man's stunts. Most of all, I love figuring out how in the world I'm going to actually be able to pull it all off." □



Fred Waugh comes crashing through a window to save a damsel in distress. Outside on the ledge, our hero was getting drenched in one of L.A.'s worst rains in 10 years.